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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an image of the learner and the relationship of the learner to society from the perspective of a set of Mohawk and Ojibway Elders participating in an Elders and Traditional Teachers Advisory Council at a Native Center in Toronto. Information from the Elders is presented in the following sequence: (1) traditional views of childhood, growth, and the "path of life"--the kinds of stages individuals go through as they progress through life and the educational implications of these stages; (2) discussion of the importance of experience in the learning process; (3) qualities of individual action and growth as expressed in the notion of the Medicine Wheel, which conceptualizes life into "empowerment" and "consciousness" sides, emphasizing people's responsibilities to themselves and to each other; (4) discussion of the relationship of the individual to the community in terms of the kinds of attitudes and activities that contribute to becoming a responsible adult within society; and (5) commentary on how this traditional "image of the learner" relates to the philosophical views of other educational institutions. Approaches such as active learning, cooperative learning, child-centered learning, and multi-age grouping consider the child's need to explore, to learn from experience, to share with others and to learn to cooperate for the common good. The school as community can help the individual become stronger and individuals can help the community become stronger. (KS)

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THE INDIVIDUAL IS THE COMMUNITY; THE COMMUNITY IS THE WORLD: NATIVE ELDERS TALK ABOUT WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW

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THE INDIVIDUAL IS THE COMMUNITY; THE COMMUNITY IS THE WORLD: NATIVE ELDERS TALK ABOUT WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW[1]

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> In general, the elders and traditional teachers perceived and defined community from an organic, relational perspective. Their vision of community can be characterized by three dominant features: 1) an extension of self and family; 2) a gathering of individual with a shared, spiritual history and cultural understanding; and 3) an evolving entity moving toward some form of wholeness or relatedness, often expressed in terms of a circle.
>
> Peng, 1990, 31-32

> I have to be part of what the young know today, I have to teach them. But the children are teaching us too. They tell us what they need. We need to listen.
>
> Ojibway Grandmother Winona Arriaga, 1992

Overview and Perspective

One aspect of schooling involves the relationship between the student and the world at large. Children are being "prepared for life," whether that life be the local community, a specific occupation, or a set of skills. This element of education is in fact an element common to all cultures. As such it takes different forms, from formal schools to informal storytelling, but the goal remains the same--the transmission of cultural material and the preparation of individuals to take a responsible part in everyday society.

This paper describes an image of the learner and the relationship of the learner to society from the perspective of a set of Mohawk and Ojibway Elders participating in an Elders and Traditional Teachers Advisory Council at an urban Native Centre. In their role as teachers to urban Native people whatever their tribal affiliation, these Elders communicate a vision for this relationship in hopes of instilling it in individuals to whom traditional norms are foreign. What they have to say, however, is not that different from the goals of many other teaching and learning organizations (Stiegelbauer, 1989). They talk about psychology, about developmental stages, about developing responsibility, and about the kinds of relationships necessary to support individual, community and world growth and health.

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Before continuing, it is important to provide a rationale for presenting this particular image of the learner. Euro-american persectives and values have permeated not ony what the learner is taught but also perspectives on who the learner is, if only by virtue of the fact that the contempary school systems are the result of a particular historical context. This context reflects only one view of human nature and the human condition. Other cultures have other views. All have a basis in human nature; all intend to support the intersection between that nature and cultural norms. The question remains however, as to what kind of person is in process here and what kind of society they are intended to fit within. The perspective presented here offers some explanation as to why Native children may not fit well with some schools, or fit well in their own society when they come home from school. The presentation of different views of the learner from the perspective of different societies provides an opportunity of develop a vision of human growth not possible within the conventions of learning common even a few years ago.

Setting and methodology

The information presented in this paper is only a piece of a larger data set that represents a collaborative study conducted by the author and the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (Stiegelbauer, 1990). The goal of this three year study was to document the involvment and participation of Native Elders who were part of an Advisory Council incorporated by the Centre within its organizational structure. In this role, the Elders act as teachers and advisors to Native people in the city, helping them understand their heritage and what it has to offer them in any context.

At the time of the initiation of the collaborative study in 1987, the Centre felt that a documentation process would 1) provide for greater access to the words and teachings of the Elders through the written medium, and 2) provide the organization with a better understanding of the goal and effect of the involvement with Elders so that the working relationship between the Elders and the Centre might be enhanced (Stiegelbauer, 1990). The Data set for the study includes written documentation and records from Centre meetings, but more importantly, it also includes transcriptions of interviews with Elders as well as general talks presented by the Elders on various topics. The content of this paper comes from the interviews and talks.

The paper presents information from the Elders in the following sequence: 1) traditional views of childhood, growth, and the "path of life"--the kinds of stages individuals go through as they progress through life and the educational implications of these stages; 2) the discussion of the important of experience in the learning process; 3) qualities of individual action and growth as expressed in the Medicine Wheel; 4) discussion of the relationship of the individual to the community in terms of the kinds of attitudes and activities that contribute to becoming a responsible adult within society; 5) a commentary on how this traditional "image of the learner" relates to the philosophical views of other educational institutions. This commentary compares and constrasts the Native perspective with the current traditions of education as they are generally expressed in the larger cultural context.

The Mohawk and Ojibway Elders describe the passage of the individual through life in similar ways. In presenting this information within a traditional framework they hope to provide the individuals listening with a way to relate their experience to that of other Native people at other points in time. In a traditional society, information is usually presented in a wholistic way, that is in a way that does not separate experience from life itself. The traditions remembered even by many of the Elders are often incomplete and do not serve the same function as they might have in a past context. However, the style and much of the content of a presentation such as this serves to reference that context, to call on what it means to be Native in identity and perspective, even if that tradition crosses or amalgamates tribal beliefs. This is especially true in an urban situation. The Elders saw this issue as one of health: in order to be healthy Native people need to know who they are, where they have come from, and from that, where they are going as Native people. In whatever form, when tradition is called upon it serves this function, i.e. to reference identity and create consensus. This point is important as what is to be presented may not represent a single tradition, but does serve to present a perspective that is "Native."

A second point is that much to this material may be said to be based on codified observations of human behavior. It is a kind of practical psychology based on common experience supported by historical and cultural norms. Elders draw on their own experience as individuals and relate that through stories and teachings to a shared view of the relationship of an individual to society and how both society and the individual support and reinforce each other. They also acknowledge the evolving nature of both these entities. However, the relevance of their teachings and guidance are grounded in their own experience as it in turn reflects the culture they grew up in. When they talk to people they use this experience to draw attention to common elements and the meaning of these elements to being human and being Native.

The Path of Life

In talking about the development of the individual, the Elders begin with a discussion of the "path of life" (Figure 1). The voice presented in the following discussion is a common voice, representing a number of different Elders comments. The description of the path is as follows: the path begins in the east and moves through the years to the west. This path of life places the individual in perspective in terms of life experiences and what those experiences say about where they are and how they should act or be treated at this point in their life. This is life on a personal plane. As one Elder said:

> When we walk this path, we carry with us all we have learned and are about to learn. We may walk this path as individuals, but we are never alone. We experience with others and learn from others. How we interpret and make use of this learning is called experience. How we learn from our experience and use it in a good way is called wisdom.

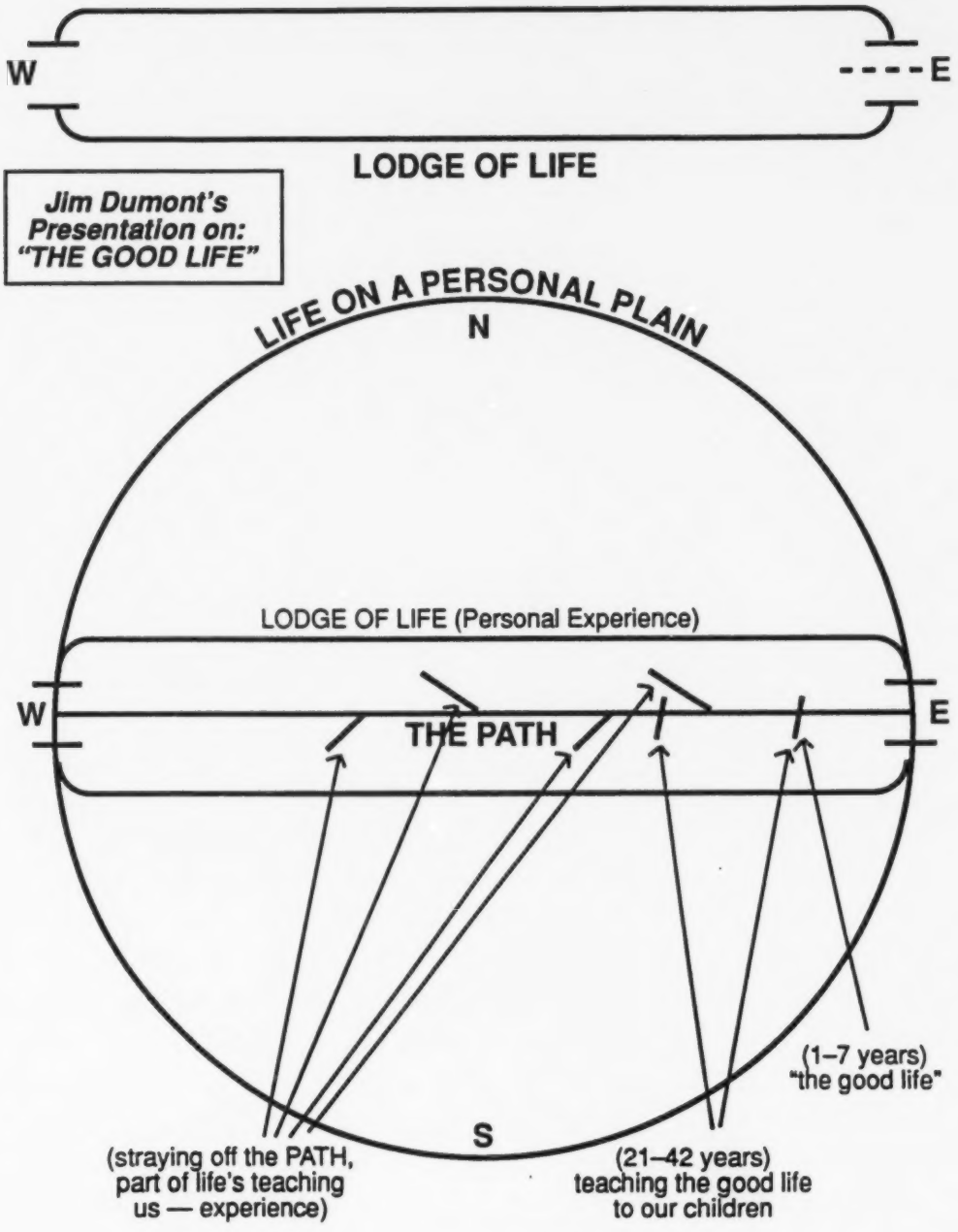
The path has seven sections. The first of these, representing the years 1-7, is called "the good life." During this time we lay the groundwork for later learning through our experiences. Parents and adults give to us. We have the instinct and need to explore for ourselves. At this point, however, we have little real responsibility. This is a time of giving and safety. Life should be easy:

> When we are born we are taught to walk the "path" by our parents. This starts for all of us, ideally, when we are between the age of one and seven years. During this time in our life we learn and want to experience for ourselves. We are taught by our parents and Elders. They steer us toward the "path" and give us their experience, the best of what they have gained through their lives is offered to us.

The second section, is the time between age 7 and puberty. During this time we are taking on more responsibility, gathering teachers and support for learning. This is the time to try things out with guidance. At the end of this phase, girls and boys may go on a vision quest to help futher determine who they are as individuals. The next phase, the teenage years, is one of rebellion and testing where the forces of sexuality and physicality create strife for young people. During this time they begin to go their own way and to seek other kinds of teachers. They share more together as peers. This phase may last until the individual is in the early twenties and is a time of seeking and solidifying the truth of their individual selves. It can be a called a wandering and wondering stage.

Figure 1

The Path of Life
(Ways and Means Committee, Dumont, 1988)



During the next phase, representing the years of adulthood, to age 45 or so, the individual begins to show evidence of what they have learned, to form and support a family, and to take on concrete responsibilities in society. A number of the Elders commented on the belief that an individual has not accumulated enough experience to speak and give opinions at community gatherings until he or she is in their mid-thirties. These first four stages involve responding what life presents; to gather experience and knowledge.

The last three phases of the path represent what an individual makes of what they have learned, what they have to offer themselves and their community. During the midlife years, an individual experiences a process of "letting go." A number of the Elders called this a powerful time, a time when women and men are more alike and when family responsibilities lessen. The next phase is that of the teacher and grandmother or grandfather. People begin to seek you out for what you have learned and the guidance you have to offer. The last stage continues this progression of age in a deeper but less active sense. At this point, it is the responsibility of the community to value and care for you. You return to the "good life" of the young child but with the wisdom of experience. As an Elder, you have the opportunity to be a beacon for others.

One Elder stated that there are two basic intentions for living a good life. The first is to grow in our own life and spirit; the second is to share life with others, to be "helpers to everyone and everything," all people and all creation. Actions taken in life whould be both for the benefit of our own life and the people. The seven stages of life as presented in the path represent 'seven stones," or important moments, given to each individual in their life. In what they do with them they are in turn responsible for the effects seven generations to follow.

The Relevance of Experience

The importance of the element of personal and collective experience is presented in a discussion of the lines going off from the "path" in Figure 1. These represent a literal straying from the path, an expected straying:

> All our personal paths are not straight. They take their turns and sometimes we stay at these turns and twists until something we gain from experience tells us to walk the "path" again.

This reinforces the idea that experience for good or bad is important and can be a teaching and learning tool. Individuals are encouraged to seek an Elders or older person that they feel they can talk to for guidance in these situations--to seek council. This, however, implies that an

understanding of a non-judgemental relationship exists. Even if not, experience can be a good teacher and with earlier experience with the "good life" individuals will natually seek a return to the path. The path and its benefits will attract them as a matter of health. What is interesting about this as codified material is its tollerance for loosing the path. However, it is the responsibility of the individual to in some way understand and monitor how far from the path they are. It is the responsibility of teachers and the community to help them understand this.

Native students are frequently characterized by schools as being "undisciplined," i.e. their parents allow them to move about freely, to make their own choices, and to learn by their experience, whatever that might be, rather than to set limits or create rules before that experience occurs. When these students come to school, the rules of school life often go against this kind of training. This is not to say that Native parents are without rules for their children, or do not provide guidance and structure, as we shall see in the next section. Rather, according to the Elders in this study, experience is its own teacher. If a person is treated and taught well by those older than themselves, even if they stray from the path they will return to it with new information unique to them as individuals.

In educational terms, this perspective has some important features. For one, it views the life of each individual as particular to them while at the same time sharing attributes in common to humankind: while everyone walks their own path, the nature of this path is somewhat predetermined by the kind of life experiences that occur at different ages. Secondly, each individual makes choices about the kinds of experiences they will have given what life presents. Experience in itself is an important teacher and a person should not be judged by the good or bad of that experience but be gently guided and reminded of what makes for the "good life," what their responsibilities are, and what "works" as time has taught in an ideal situation. In presenting a portrait of the whole path, individuals can place themselves in a human context. They can see themselves as part of an evolving whole. Their life may have different experiences, as contexts change, but human nature remains the same.

Qualties of individual action and growth: the Medicine Wheel

The second part of the teachings of the Elders involves the qualities and values that contribute to the development of the individual and through action to that of the community. These qualities emphasize that people depend on each other and have responsibilities to themselves and each other. Discussion of these qualities was presented by the Elders through a teaching tool called

the "Medicine Wheel" (Figure 2). The word "Medicine" conventionally means "that which contributes to health." This is just one version of it. Different individuals may present it differently. The circle of the Medicine Wheel adds another dimension to the path of life, in that it is constantly turning around that path as in a spiral, presenting different values and attributes of behavior to individuals as they grow and mature.

The innermost circle, called the "personal" Medicine Wheel, starts in the east with the quality of KINDNESS. "Kindness is like the mother sharing her life and her nourishment with the child." It is the earliest thing the child encounters. The Wheel them turns to the south which represents HONESTY, SINCERITY, AND NURTURING--how the mother deals with life, giving to and providing a model for her child. Then it turns to the north which represents STRENGTH: " accepting this sharing makes the child strong." At a later point in life, an individual uses these experiences to be kind to others, honest in their efforts, to share with others, and grow strong in their personal conviction and in the nourishment provided to them through their experiences and through sharing. The emphasis on sharing was a matter of survival in the past, and also a matter of good use of resources. Today this emphasis serves to reinforce the need of Native people to help one another and to gain strength from what they do together--strength in identity and in health.

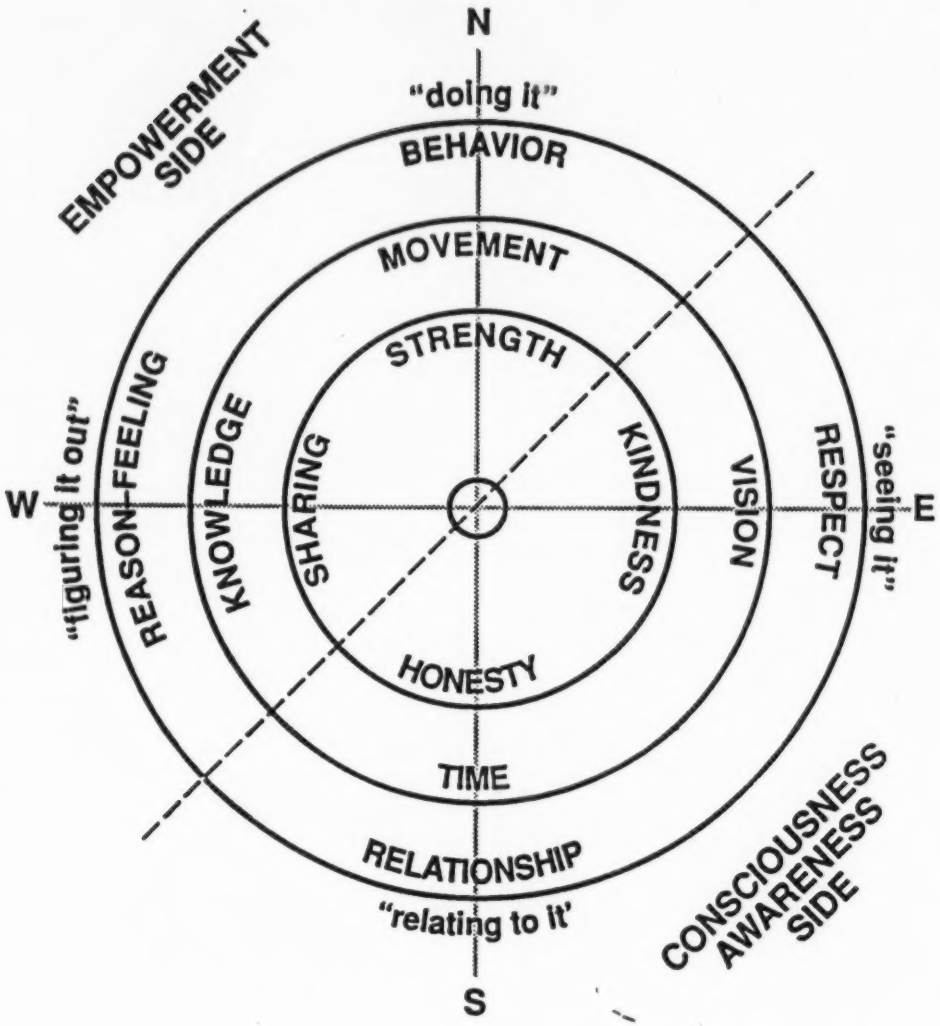
The second circle moves in the same direction as the innermost one, but addresses a different level of teaching. Again beginning in the east, the circle starts with VISION. Vision refers to coming into the "Lodge of Life," i.e. being born, being able to "see"--belief, ideas, a sense of what lies ahead. According to the Elders, vision coupled with belief represents a view of the world. Following vision to the south comes TIME. Time refers to the time it takes to experience your life--the time of living, "at the end of which you should know something." Next comes the west and KNOWLEDGE. Knowledge means the growth that comes from experience, and understanding of life and the meaning of it. With knowledge comes the ability to create MOVEMENT (north). Movement refers to doing--being able to apply the knowledge that has been acquired. Real application of knowledge does not occur until later in life when enough experience (time) has accumulated to develop knowledge and act on it.

For the Elders, however, vision is where everything starts:

> If you don't start with vision it is difficult to reclaim it. The dominant society starts in the knowledge part of the circle by focusing on the institutions of learning. Starting at vision enables you to see the whole picture, to know your direction and develop it appropriately 'through the natural process' of how the 'Vision' unfolds into reality and creative 'doing.' We need to think 'as if' we are

Figure 2

The Medicine Wheel
(Ways and Means Committee, Dumont, 1988)



> just out of the birth canal or on a vision fast. We see clearly and with fresh vision what is ahead of us and we have a visioned direction to hold us and guide up to where we are going. Vision is the 'spirit' behind everything; it gives the impetus to things; it is at the core of everything. It underlies all.

Applying vision gives any enterprise intention and purpose and a desire to evolve and grow toward wholeness and integrity with all its parts.

The third dimension of the Wheel starts in the east with RESPECT. Respect is related to vision:

> If we secure a 'vision' by the age of 14 (on a vision quest), the whole of our future rests on the preparation and acquiring of this vision. Through dreams, expectations, ideas, and insights gained in pursuit of this vision, we adopt an attitude of respect--not only for our personal concerns, but for seeing the world in a certain way. Whatever you believe in, you will respect.

From the south comes RELATIONSHIP. Experiencing, taking the time o create awareness and "get to know Mother Earth," helps us find out how things are in relation to one another: "to get to knoe life and people and learn from this. We have to know how the 'vision' we acquired relates to the 'real' world. We always have to match vision to reality to stay with people. We can't create a dream with a needs assessment, we have to dream it first." Turning to the west, the Wheel presents REASON/FEELING. When knowledge and knowing accompanies reason and feeling, you have understanding:

> It is important to use the mind, but be led by the heart. True knowledge is trying to understand the meaning of vision in terms of life's experiences.

Again to the north is BEHAVIOR, to "be" what you have learned.

The Elders also described the Medicine Wheel as being split by an imaginary line from southwest to northeast (see Figure 2). On the south side, there is "consciousness/awareness." "This side enables us to see first, to see our dreams through vision and allow for time to relate these dreams to the world we live in." On the north side is "empowerment" where we are able to put dreams into action:

> By gaining experience, sharing it with others, understanding how the dreams relate to everyday life, we well be able to act upon them. Thus, the dream becomes a reality.

The qualities expressed in the Medicine Wheel emphasize that people depend on each other and have a responsibility to themselves and each other. These responsibilities more concretely as they progress through the path of life. But the ideal person embodies the qualities of kindness, honesty, sharing, strength, vision, respect, reason and feeling, in their everyday actions and in

their relationships with others. In theory, individual and community health occurs when these qualities are put into action. In one sense these qualities when put into action have direct bearing on the quality of life for others: when we have respect for ourselves and others, we treat each other more carefully; understanding the relationships one element or person has with another helps see how they might work together or be interdependent; reason and feeling is the key to knowledge, i.e. True knowledge is the attempt to understand the meaning of vision in terms of life's experiences. It must happen through the heart and the mind. Finally, the end product of this is expressed through behavour: the person becomes what they have learned, for good or bad.

How an individual learns about these things, including how to accomplish a vision and gain in knowledge and experience is also presented in the Medicine Wheel. The Wheel is divided into four quadrants: seeing, relating, figuring it out, and doing it-- as parts of a process. Imbedded in that process are indicators of how this should be done: with respect, with feeling, allowing experience and relating to develop over time, through sharing and kindness, and developing knowledge from all these factors. Most importantly it portrays action, behavior, and strength or confidence as the result of the process and as contributing to the process in an ongoing way. The emphasis on vision is also an emphasis on individual talents and a human need for meaning, the "why" of the equation.

The Medicine Wheel and the Path of Life describe learning as a continuous and integrated process. It has different emphases at different points in life. It is interdependent with other parts of the whole. It is not linear and separated from everyday life, but acts on everyday life as experience is accumulated. It is a process that starts with the self and develops through interaction and choices.

<u>The individual is the community, the community is the world</u>

The Medicine Wheel empasizes both personal growth and the benefits of relating and sharing with others. This might be stated even more strongly. The Medicine Wheel presents a picture of how things work and this includes the need for relating and sharing in order to grow as a person. Up to this point, the perspective presented has been that of the learner. This section discusses the relationship of the learner to the community.

The Elders continuously emphasize the need to ground information or teaching in the self. The place to start is with the self. However, as a healthy community is necessary to the development

of a healthy individual there is always a kind of dynamic tension between the individual and the social context. On the one hand, the Elders would see them as one and the same: the community is an extension of the self and the family. It is also a gathering of individuals with a shared history and understanding. Further, like the human organism, the community is also an evolving entity seeking wholeness and health.

Developing the community is a social matter, involving dialogue and interaction. As described in the Medicine Wheel, it is relational, dependant on the nature and quality of interactions and relationships. As one Elder stated:

> The dynamics of community is beginning with two people. And it has to do with positive and negative dynamics. So two people come together, that's the beginning of a community. So the dynamic that operates within communities is either cohesive or it's divisive. Our work is to search for that cohesion (Peng 1990: 32).

The process of community also comes from continuity with the past. One Elder said, "a community, as an extension of the family...has to have a sense of collective cultural or racial identity" (Peng 1990: 34). Another describes the "process of community as beginning with one's sense of the special attribute or distinction of being an aboriginal person. A community...is created by the sharing of knowledge, the cultural teaching, and through dialogue; it must begin, however, with an awareness of one's unique identity" (Peng 1990: 35). This concept of shared identity is not foreign to schools. Most schools, however, present a shared identity that reflects a cultural history different from that common to in Native communities.

The image of community presented by the Elders suggests that the community is both the "source and object of relationships...that individuals bring and posit into a community their commitment and relationships and, in turn, draw from the community a larger context (circle) for the development and maintenance of those relationships" (Peng, 1990: 38-39). The creation of the larger context in dependent on the interaction of individuals concerning their own and community needs. Relationships within a Native community are also often interchangeable or flexible. One Elder describes how when a boy grows up without his father, it is the communities' responsibility to provide him with an uncle. "It is the community's role to provide individuals with the necessary relationships for survival" (Peng, 1990: 39).

The Elders' concept of community can be said to be a kind of metaphor describing both the collective and the "whole" individual:

> The Elders concept of community can be "defined by two dominant generative metaphors: a community as a circle and a community as an expression of a whole person. The circle carries with it the message of the community's relational orientation and inclusive nature. In itself it is a whole, a circle not to be broken. While the circle metaphor may provide a holistic image of community, it also casts a static, even conservative impression. This is balanced by the second metaphor. In this metaphor, a community is seen as a dynamic being; it has a life cycle; it has good and bad elements; it experiences both sickness and health, like a human being (Peng 1990: 66-67).

The tie between the community and the individual is a reciprocal one--because the community survives it nurtures the individual; as the individual is stronger, the community is stronger. Ojibway writer Basil Johnson discusses this relationship in the Ojibway tradition: "the more resourceful the individual, the more whole, the more strong, the better for his community" (1976: 70). The Elders emphasize the need to strengthen individuals in order to strengthen the community. A "whole person" is one who is strong in spirit, body and mind, "living in necessary coexistence with others" (Peng 1990: 74).

Coexistence with other includes all others in the natural world, not just immediate family or community. The Elders' vision of a healthy community is that of a community in balance with nature, in harmony with nature. This harmony with nature is expressed in the traditional sweetgrass ceremony, in reverence for the earth, in reverence for women--in that women are the source of creation, as in "Mother Earth." Harmony is also expressed in natural relationships, what Peng (1990) calls "economics" or "forms of human interaction" about survival. According to the Elders, a natural, relational, solution would be a co-operative and non competitive one.

For the Elders, the dynamic relationship between the individual, the community and the world is one that provides a capacity for constant regeration and renewal as part of an ongoing, organic process. Most importantly, it is a collaborative process where the parts inform the whole and vice versa; where the young and the old must participate together in order to build upon the past and survive the future. The relationship between the individual, the community and these potentially changing circumstances is one grounded in tradition and traditional values but sustained by communication and dialogue. As people interact about who they are in a new circumstance, that circumstance is transformed to express that relationship, that belonging, and becomes a part of their past and present as a "people." This in turn, strengthens the individuals' concept of who they are and why they are here.

The "image of the learner"

The Elders at the Native Canadian Centre in Toronto describe a learner as having the following characteristics:

1) the foundation for the "good life" or health and capacity for learning is modeled through the structure and behaviour at home during the early years.

2) as a child develops in age they can be asked to take on practical responsibilities relevant to their age. These responsibilities go beyond tasks to values, gathering experience, understanding it and expressing it in behaviour. This changes developmentally as a child ages. Learning is a life long process but each stage has different qualities. Learning involves mind, body and spirit simultaneously not separately.

3) experience is the foundation for learning. Understanding experience is developed over time through dialogue. Experience is neither good nor bad but a natural result of exploration.

4) children should be allowed to make choices and to gather unique and individual experience within the framework of modeled values, discussion and community good. Each individual has something unique to offer as a result of who they are and their accumulated experience.

5) learning is a process that is accomplished through interaction with others; it is always a shared, cooperative venture.

6) the foundation for interaction with others is expressed through respect, feeling, a good heart, good intentions, kindness, sharing and a knowledge of self.

7) each individual is unique yet a part of a whole community. The community and the individual have reciprocal responsibilities. In one sense the individual and the community and the world are the same entity, interdependent. What affects one, affects the others.

8) learning begins with vision--of self, of goals, of the whole, of the direction a task is to go in. It is a process that goes through the stages of "seeing" (vision), relating to what it is, figuring it out with heart and mind, and acting on findings in some way (behaviour).

9) the old and the young need each other: one to provide the understanding of experience from their own experiences; the other to frame that discussion in terms of current and changing needs. The child's world may be different from that of the adult as it reflects a changing world.

10) everyone has a responsibility to give back and to consider their actions in the light of their effect on generations to come.

In the Native world, body, mind and spirit are intimately connected. What affects one, affects the other. Teachers, therefore, must consider these connections in presenting information. One way to address body, mind and spirit connection is through activities that address all at once. Activities such as ceremonies, social events, visualization, physical activities and skill

development are all linked together in a way that allows each individual to connect with them as is their need at the time.

Many of the concepts about learning expressed in these perspectives have become popular in various forms in recent years, especially at the elementary level. Approaches such as active learning, cooperative learning, child-centered learning, multi-age grouping and the like consider the child's need to explore, to learn from experience, to share with others, and to learn to cooperate for the common good. This reflects in part a change in society where the propositions of Piaget and Erikson have begun to have greater effect on the life of schools as a whole. It also may be said that changes in the world itself require cooperation over competition as well as the ability to change jobs, be self motivated and flexible.

The Province of Ontario's The Foundation Years (1990) describes the learner as self motivated and self directed with an intrinsic desire to learn; as unique; as an independent learner; as able to interact with others about a task. What is missing in this kind of formulation is the link between the learner and the broader context of learning, the community and the world. The Elders might say that the diversity of communities and the imposition of one social system and point of view, a view that has been historically individualistic and competitive, mediates against developing this linkage. If the community begins with the self, and the self is imbedded in the community, there has to be a sense of what that community is in terms of reciprocity and support. This is something that must be modeled as much as taught; that must be in the experience of the learner.

Conclusion

The perspective taken by the Elders Council of the Native Centre is that Native people need to be responsibile for themselves and their personal growth in a positive way. By helping individuals come to terms with "who they are,"as it relates to the past, the present and the potential of the future, they also need to understand their relationship to their community as it is this community that nutures them, gives them strength, and at the same time is in need of their strength and abilities. The Elders talk about community in terms of a circle, a symbol of wholeness, and as an expression of a whole person. A whole person is one who is able to take and give back--this is a dynamic process, a process that is a metaphor for both the individual and the community. The Elders see the community as a dynamic being; "it has a life cycle; it has good and bad elements; it experiences both sickness and health, just like a human being" (Peng, 1990, 66). The tie between the community and the individual is a reciprocal one, thus the

Elders see working with individuals and working with the community as one and the same thing. They emphasize the need to strengthen individuals in order to strengthen the community. A "whole person" is one who is "strong in spirit, body and mind, living in necessary coexistence with others," says one Elder (Stiegelbauer, 1990, 312).

While there has been much emphasis in the educational world on attributes of the learner, the tie between the learner and the community is implicit rather than explicit, as is a definition of community itself. Individuals today barely belong to family units, much less communities in the traditional sense. There has been some effort to describe the school itself as a community. If we put aside the social problems contributing to a problem with community and focus on what community is, at least from the perspective of these Elders, we may come to a better understanding of the necessary relationships that contribute to community, relationships that can support even a school's definition of itself as a community.

This paper describes a Native perspective on the individual and the community. It relates that perspective to some of the philosophies current in education today and makes suggestions as to what might need to happen to strengthen the aspect of community in schools. It talking about this from the Native perspective, the paper seeks to use a different set of information to get to an important social point--how to develop and maintain strong, healthy individuals who will choose to make a contribution to society. The Native view sees communities as bounded units, and it may be possible that a smaller unit is more approachable that looking for a working relationship to the world at large. This is encouraging for the school as a community. In presenting this information, this paper seeks to open discussion on the relationship between the individual and society, to begin a dialogue that contributes to understanding and action toward a healthier community, whether it be in the school or without.

According to the Elders, as healhy individuals and healthy communities are formed and people begin to understand and act on their relationships within a community system, they will in turn begin to understand their relationships and responsibilities to the world. Therefore, the individual is the community and the community is the world. As one becomes healthy, the other relationships contributing to healty will begin to fall into place. As the world stands now, this is something worthy of working for.

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